to tame you

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by istgeve

Summary

He lifts a brow at the wolf still writhing under the indecipherable miracle that this omega is, sitting peacefully atop a convulsing chest with wicked eyes. His bare chest is heaving in and out on heavy gasps, and he is glaring at Hannibal, as though daring him to have a go himself.

Hannibal is certain that he has never been quite so enchanted in his entire life.

Notes

So, hello. This one is pretty rushed, because I woke up one morning absolutely fucking convinced that I had to write omegaverse, and I had to do it immediately. This chapter and the general outline of this fic was written in a day, and will hopefully be finished by the end of this week. Stay tuned.

Chapter 1

"*Lunge*." Hannibal whispers.

Trees rattle from their embroiled roots. Calloused feet claw at soil, press dents into it, and inside their little prickled holes bury fury, and drive strength from the heart of the earth. Nature pursues their tails, her delicate wind a compass, her cradle reverent in the ancient language of ivy. They *soar*; they are led by primordial force, by unmarred instinct — it has never failed them.

He yokes through the forest, his pack essentials extending out from behind himself, hot on his heels, ever urging, challenging, daring. He withholds the howl at their uncivilized demeanor, if anything for the sake of their prey.

(Rogues — unwelcome guests at his territory, though, comedically facile to dispose of.)

Wind blows south, beaconing the path, until at one point, it turns upon them — fast, insistent, it is almost as though a warning to heed, a reprimand for a crime not yet committed.

Hannibal is first to freeze in his tracks, claws skidding across the grass; Birds cry out from their branches, flee far. He is known to pride himself with his enhanced sense of smell that has always been more pungent than any: what he smells now, it must be why Nature has deemed it vital to intervene, for she is delicate in dissection and a firm believer of the natural course of moulding destiny — must be why his essentials crumple to a stop in a heap, seconds after him.

He inhales, wind crisp as it slides down his throat, eyelids falling closed.

Omega.

Indeed, it is very distinctly the scent of omega, though it is by no means a consolatory fragrance. *Caution*, it reads, the scent of syrupy lavender acrid on his tongue. *Fear; fierce, fiery* ***fear***.

He is frowning as he approaches the tree line, until the tall chicory and nettle clear way to a grassy opening. Amidst the field, there is a mere lone human, circling frantically and scanning the lining of trees in a sort of agitated haste, as though threatened — immediate to his approach, they flinch in Hannibal's direction, eyes locking with such vigor that he is momentarily overcome by a sense of malign thunder rumbling across his skull.

The omega smells not sweet, though the undertone of blossom is notable; the smell is one of earth, of herbal spice — he inhales, deeply, once more, cataloguing: pine, moss, lemongrass covert by a stinging, primitive lavender.

What strikes him as earnestly peculiar is that the omega does not cower in its evident fear, but rather approaches Hannibal in a threatening stance that is eerie when displayed by the

conventionally smaller body. Nevertheless, it is of worth — Hannibal has to *strain* not to step back. *Very interesting.*

Instead, he takes a step forward, gradually entering the human form, as softly as he can manage with his creaking, readjusting bones — he nurses every intention of introducing himself and inquiring after the whereabouts and physiological state of the distressed omega, when, there is an unforeseen blur above them, and he is half a second too late to register that the omega is *attacking* him.

He topples to the ground with great force whilst amidst completing his transition to his human and, unsurprisingly, arrogant enough to assume it would not pose a disadvantage. He does not waste time to stand and throw himself right back at the omega wolf — because it is a wolf, now — willing to engulf it by the ribs and render it immobile. He does not mean harm, but will not abide to be harmed, either.

Except, that, he is back on the ground in a blink, a deep-aquamarine pit of rage maiming him to the ground by gaze alone; the claws that pin his arms from the elbow down and the two-hundred-and-fifty pounds atop him do not aid in his state, either.

Agile, he notes. *Fast — very fast.*

The omega lets out an honest-to-god *growl*, delving for Hannibal's throat, only to swerve at the last moment in favor of a sudden, aggrieved howl. Hannibal sees in the corner of his vision that Bedelia has bitten, rather unnecessarily on-the-spot, into the neck of the omega, and is actively wrestling the wolf beside him.

Bedelia — she makes for an other-worldly creature, her fur blonde and thinned in a manner that imitates silk mid-air. However, her grace is by no means an indication of clemency in combat, during which she becomes something vicious, tyrannical; in many cases, possessive.

Her coat is matted, now, stuck together by blood, the scent of it tangy in his mouth, heavy in the air. It drives Hannibal to take inventory of himself, as well as the two other essentials that have taken to the field: Randall, his right hand command, is beside him, human — he is well accounted-for. He watches the pair, instead; the blood that has attached itself to Bedelia belongs as much to her as it does to the omega, which is remarkable on the grounds that she is one of the most skilled warriors that they've got.

Randall casts him a ferocious look, ready to pounce on command; Hannibal holds up a hand.

"Observe." He whispers, nearly drowned out by the growls that echo in ripples through dawn. "We may never bear witness to anything of this nature, ever again."

The omega howls, right then, subverting their match by striking Bedelia down; he locks his jaw around a back leg and *pulls*, hurling her across the ground, drawing a perfect half-circle that will no doubt throw her off-kilter before twisting his neck, sharp enough to make Hannibal wince; with a crack, the bone between his teeth gives, and Bedelia *keens*, her whines echoing softly as she slumps, unable to recover from further damage.

Only then does the omega retract, pulling away and commencing to adopt the form of his human. Hannibal watches with a level of interest he has never yet been captive to, but does not repeat the mistake of daring to step any closer.

It is well impossible to draw any conclusions, at first glance, for the blood coating the majority of the body does not reveal its proprietor to far-away gawkers. But the omega is still threatened, and somehow still upright, despite a dark smudge above his collarbone that very clearly oozes spurts of chunky blood. Hannibal, now more intensely subjected to his scent, can dissect the determined bloodlust that radiates from the source like a spring stream.

Thereat, he must suffer under the hands of an internal battle between stepping back or forward, against better judgement: he is not particularly scared of the feral omega but immensely weary, but in other matters infinitesimally curious as to its compartment, of what makes up the way it operates.

He steps closer.

Herewith, he sees: the omega is a male.

The omega is a male, but not only that, he is simply *beautiful*. Most of him is obscured by the blackened blood, but Hannibal recognizes that wild pit of aquamarine that had stared him into a stillness before undiscovered, and accomplishes to do so now as he approaches, bearing a most murderous glint to his eye — the sight is abruptly *mesmerizing*.

It is Randall, who perhaps is not as entranced by the display of utter ethereal pulchritude as he is far too blinded by fear for his pack-mate and the very real possibility of themselves ending up in the same condition as her — no wonder, since she is at present lain unconscious — that slices the air, abandoning his human as he goes.

The omega smiles, a sickly little thing that reads more triumph than joy, bends down to dodge the ginormous body in wolf form, and drops his weight on his palms, balancing on a handstand that falls swiftly into a backbend and kicks Randall square on the nose as it lands. Baffled, Randall shoots out blindly, flinging several perfervid kicks, of which one is caught with remarkable precision and consecutively pulled out from under him. The omega, still an unbelievably meager boy, jumps over the sliding wolf and overturns him, landing gracefully with Randall's neck trapped between his bent thighs, arms meeting behind his back to entrap the two front feet.

He lifts a brow at the wolf still writhing under the indecipherable miracle that this omega is, sitting peacefully atop a convulsing chest with wicked eyes. His bare chest is heaving in and out on heavy gasps, and he is glaring at Hannibal, as though daring him to have a go himself.

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"Tier." He announces, curt. "Stop fighting and surrender to your evident defeat. Don't be a prisoner to your self-esteem."

Randall huffs, sneeze-like and indignant, chafed, before stilling obediently.

Hannibal turns to address the omega, but is coerced into rapid muteness upon the realization that the gaze of the omega did not at all waver — it is one of pure wrath. He has no issues with wrath, certainly; even though it appears misplaced on the face of such an untainted picture of beauty.

"*Omega*." He lulls the word, meaning to sooth not the troubled mind but the troubled animal that lay inside of him. "You'd do well to release your prey and spare some of his honor."

The omega rises, slowly, from around Randall's neck: all the magnanimity of a predator traces his every maneuver, and he makes his way to the center of the field where Hannibal has come to stand. They listen, Hannibal in a trans-like stupor, as Randall's bones each pop into place with a sickening squelch.

He spares him a glance. "Take Bedelia and return home. I will follow once this matter is settled."

Randall nods, heaving, and stumbles toward the fallen wolf, bending down to shoulder her weight. Hannibal's attention wanders after that, and he does not notice they have left until the omega shifts in his stance, defensive, once again prepared for a match — yet, he is favoring his left shoulder, visibly under exalted stress.

"I do not want to fight you." Hannibal states, calmly. "I mean no harm. Nor did my friends."

"Am I supposed to believe that?" The omega mumbles, aiming his body diagonally, good arm braced before his chest to strike — there is the knowledge of observation, but all that Hannibal hears is the gravelly voice, rough and lilting.

He considers speaking the Voice, if only to soothe his pain to an extent, or forcing his body to release calming pheromones; yet, he cannot imagine the omega would react well to either. All that is left to construct some semblance of trust is ancient, unsolicited honesty. He sighs.

"What can I do," despite himself, there is the barest hint of a rumble that reverberates across the air. Well. "To prove that I will not hurt you?"

The omega is addled for only half a second before his mouth purses sharply. "Cease attempts at manipulation, for starters."

Clever little thing. "I am terribly sorry; I merely meant to calm you."

"I am calm."

"You are wounded. You must be distressed."

"I am not." He scoffs, a bark more than anything else, "Though, I'd say your friends are. I'd even say *you* are."

"Forgive me." Hannibal amends, because it is true, because he is *confused*, and apprehensive, on the most precarious edge. It is incredibly rare that an alpha experiences deliberate menace from an omega.

But then it dawns. “You can trace my scent? It is currently insipid.”

“I can trace anything.” The omega replies, does not elaborate — Hannibal so dearly wishes he would. There are so many *questions*.

“Let me help you.”

The omega laughs: uneasiness gnaws devilishly at Hannibal’s ribs.

“You want to help me?” He snarls. “Leave.”

“Omega—“

“Do not call me that.”

“I apologize. What would you like me to call you?”

“Do not refer to me, if you can help it. You are to leave immediately, and we will likely never see each other again.”

“May I point out that *you* were in *my* territory?”

“Point taken. It will not happen again.”

Stubborn. “You are being difficult.”

“You are the one insisting.”

“I wish to help you.”

“I do not need your help.”

Hannibal huffs, glancing about the field — an ample map of blood tracks are drying under the rising sun. It appears gravely picturesque. “I can see that, but you are wounded. Surely, you will not mend that by yourself?”

“I can take care of myself.”

“I have no doubts that you cannot — still, you must admit it is… unconventional.”

“I have survived alone for twelve years.”

Hannibal cannot help the disgruntled noise that escapes his throat. An omega is not biologically fit to survive solitary for even *six months*. “Twelve? Dear boy—“

“Will.” The omega corrects. “I am not a *boy* — that’s even worse than omega. My name is Will.”

“Will.” Hannibal says, stepping closer. Will stares dubiously at his feet, but guards his stance. “Allow me to provide shelter for you, even for a night. I could not sleep at night knowing that I have abandoned a wounded omega.”

“Oh,” Will gasps, then, and immediately Hannibal is prepared to pounce, to rush to his aid; except, the omega begins smiling.

Such a peculiar creature.

He *smiles* — Hannibal is transfixed. “Am I supposed oblige so that you may sleep at night?”

Will circles him like a predator would, which is so *strange* — he is an omega yet somehow is exceedingly capable of carrying himself with the promise of malice. *Strange little boy — Will.* “I shall surrender myself, so that you can go to bed with an easy conscience, so pleased with yourself for providing for the hurt omega like the good little alpha that you are? All generous and superior and *haughty* ?”

Hannibal only registers that he is growling when it is loud enough to rebound among the treetops. Will’s smile turns sinister.

“Exactly my point.”

Hannibal swallows; never in his life has he felt this way. Remiss, belittled. “You are purposefully aggravating me.”

“And it’s working.”

“I am imploring you to think for your own benefit.”

“You think I am not? How the fuck do you think I survive?”

Hannibal feels his mouth twitch. “By letting yourself accept help, I hope.”

“By staying the fuck away from pricks like yourself.”

“I am the most amenable *prick* you will meet for miles. You assaulted two of my pack essentials, yet I am still willing to provide shelter for you.”

Will grins. “Those were your essentials?”

He is immensely *rude* — yet, Hannibal cannot find it within himself to fault him for it. Will is, no matter how masterfully strengthened he displays himself, an omega: it is almost easy to pick apart from the scent of destructivity the subtle undertone of *fear, hurt, pain;* he is able to detect the tremor to the fine hands, the way his shoulders cave in for half a second before Will remembers to straighten them.

“I will admit you possess skill.”

Eyes flash at him — he will not accept the compliment, but will not deny any beneficial assumption to his self-preservation. Cunning. “Will that fact persuade you to leave me be?”

“Let’s compromise.” Hannibal offers: if there is one thing that is absolute, it is that Will would never physically turn his back to him. “I am refusing to abandon you by my own

volition, and I will not be persuaded otherwise. You are welcome, however, to walk away from me."

Will is surprised — it is conveyed, involuntarily, by the odor of fresh mint. It flows over the scent like scorching lava, neutralizing any other tell. The sudden urge to curl his upper lip to bare his teeth in a snarl is nearly oppressive, but as far as Hannibal's self-control extends, he is left with a watering mouth instead.

"Fine."

Will begins retreating, walking backwards, never letting his eyes go astray — until the instant he reaches the tree line, where he falters; a moment later he is no longer human. After another, he is no longer there.

Hannibal accomplishes to persuade himself to stay put for all of thirty seconds, before he begins his pursue.

"I suppose it is my foolishness to believe you would just let me go without a catch — I cannot comprehend what your catch might be, other than the fact that you are an unmated alpha of high rank and that I am a lone omega; I only know that you have not left me alone, despite the strong and *explicit* wording of my desire for you to do so, and that I am at every disadvantage at your hands." Will pauses, gazing at the sky, speaking to it. "Yet, you do not strike. Therefore you must be frightened; I have merely bested your best warriors, after all."

With a brief exhale of resignation, Hannibal emerges from the mass of bushes he had concealed himself behind. "Is it so improbable that I wish to help you?"

"Yes." Will rasps. His voice is growing scarred as the morning proceeds. "How will you benefit from it?"

"The simple knowledge of having helped another soul."

Will gathers a bay leaf in his palm, a leaf of Daphne; it is damp from when he has dipped each one in the salted lake, and he presses it flat on his injured shoulder. "I find it hard to believe that."

Hannibal stares at the leaf until it is soaking crimson, until it is dripping stripes down his chest. Will removes it carefully, with the steadiest fingers, the most neutral expression; the poor thing cannot even imagine that Hannibal scents every wail of pain that oozes, blatantly ignored. Will replaces the leaf, entirely unperturbed, even as his pheromones double in agony. It is then, that Hannibal realizes: he must have completely tuned his omega out, is likely not even cognizant of the scent he is producing.

How obstructive it must be, to neglect the omega interlinked with his soul.

"You find it hard to reconcile with compassion because you have never been shown it."

“Don’t psychoanalyze me, Alpha.” Will mumbles, crushing the remaining leaves into a jaundiced paste. It is said absently, the title; more as an insult than anything else, but still, it makes something in Hannibal stutter with benignity.

“Please, Will.” He whispers. Will looks up at him, through those lashes, something resembling bewilderment swirling beneath.

The sentiment hardens to the ragged stone of a cliff-side, as swiftly as it passes.

“Surely, you do not intend on sleeping atop these leaves?”

Will scoffs, grinding a twig of rosemary between his thumbs. “I am not, now that you’re aware of my location. I will find another pile of leaves once you have left. Somewhere far away.”

“You cannot travel wounded.”

“I have suffered much worse.”

“I am sorry to hear that, but that does not mean you have to suffer through this, either.”

Will finally turns to him, mouth curved in a fleeting smile that awakens prospect, that provides hope that he will at last allow himself to be helped. It is, like many expressions of sentiment Will fails to reign and lets escape transversely, snuffed out as soon as it is offered.

“If you will insist on keeping me company, at least do it silently, please.”

Most peculiarly, Hannibal finds himself obeying. They sit, silently, as per requested; Will does not turn his back to him, but angles his wounds away from sight whenever he is licking them clean. He grounds yarrow and rosemary under a flat pebble, mixes them with the murky bay paste — while applying it atop the wounds that scatter across his body he is disconcertingly slow. Hannibal attempts to keep track, to ensure that the blood loss isn’t an urgency, but t hose, too, he turns away from Hannibal.

“You are cold.” He observes, after some time. It must nearly be past noon; the sun casts vicious shadows upon Will’s wounds, now coated with semi-transparent mush.

“It’s summer.” Will deadpans.

“You have lost a lot of blood.”

Will has mostly been rigid, posture tense, no matter his diligent cloaking of practiced nonchalance. The truth that he is unused to the prolonged companionship of an alpha outside combat is virtually unmistakable.

Will is, looks, and sounds exhausted — Hannibal is aware he will outright refuse succumbing to sleep until he is out of vicinity; he will eventually have to indulge the offer if he wishes to sleep at all.

“How long do you intend on sitting there?” He croaks; certainly aware of it, too.

“As long as it will take you to agree returning with me.”

Will shifts; so do the leaves that insufficiently bind his wound. “I am capable of attacking you.” He declares, even as he winces at the dried blood that pulls at his skin.

Stubborn, impish boy. Hannibal smiles at him. “I am aware, and also capable of defending myself.”

Will’s responding smile does not quite reach his eyes; it’s not quite a smile, either. “You realize I have already knocked you down once.”

“That was before you became injured, and I was caught off-guard. I am at every advantage, at the moment; just as you yourself said.”

“Is that a threat?”

“It is a promise of my persistence. You cannot fend me off.”

“I will die trying.”

“I will not kill you.”

“You’re contradicting yourself.”

“You—“ He begins, but cannot continue. *You are maddening, thoroughly irritating.* Perhaps. *You are so scared, so afraid. Let me help you* — but he has already said that, hasn’t he?

“You are still cold.” He says, instead. Will opens his mouth to no-doubt deny the obvious, but Hannibal interjects before he can begin. “You are shivering, Will. Quite profoundly.”

Will sighs, curls into himself, and does not say a word.

By nightfall, Will is close to spasms, and is continuously adamant at rejecting aid. With the suns descent beyond the horizon, darkness unfolds overhead, where a myriad of stars glow luminous, but not to the extent that they provide any warmth. If Will was trembling under the sun, he is positively shuddering now.

As the shroud of dusk settles, the forest awakens with a whispering mist, a mellow hue, that absorb the color from Will’s cheeks. Hannibal is rapidly growing anxious, resolved that should Will fall unconscious, he will immediately bring the both of them home.

But instead, in the wake of Will’s silence, he watches the ancient trees, the gnarled branches reaching skyward, the fireflies; he listens to the cacophony of resonant owls, the bellow of crickets, the gentle rustle of leaves underfoot — he waits. He waits for *something*.

“Fine.”

“Pardon?”

“Only for one night.” Will growls. He is drooping with exhaustion, yet still ferocious, protective, he is still *growling*. “I will get a room with a lock, and you will let me go in the morning.”

“After I tend to your wounds, of course.”

“Must you?”

“Yes. I have refrained from intruding, Will, but it is quite a dire wound, one that requires proper stitching. I am a doctor.”

He catches a whiff of mint in the breeze, and smothers his smile. Will sighs. “Fine. But w e’ll walk.”

For a second, Hannibal cannot find his words, consternated beyond speech. When he does, he is tentative. “I assure you, Will, that we cannot walk.”

“If this is about—“

“Afoot, it will be two days. Running will merely take three hours.”

“I’ll run, then.”

“You are certainly not running in your condition. You will ride on my back.”

Will raises both his brows. “Is that an order?”

“It is a *please*.”

Giving Will no time to counter-argue, he dives, beckoning his wolf. His transitions are artfully controlled after decades of practice; his bones are lenient with him, and they do not so much crack as adjust.

Standing on fours, he is almost as tall as Will’s shoulders — his muzzle is aligned perfectly with the respective scent glands, and it is an entirely new experience, being in close proximity to the omega with senses that are significantly heightened compared to his human; his scent bleeds over the environmental foliage and the residual scents of other wolves that have been where they are. In fact, his scent is *everywhere*, potent enough that not an inch of ground stretching beneath their feet bears any unique fragrance that rivals Will’s own.

It is *dizzying*. Hannibal has to purposefully hold his breath as he leans into Will and nudges his good shoulder, motioning him to get on his back. Even the mere suggestion is enough to release the same sour lavender Will had produced on the field — he has not figured out if it means *anger* or *fear*, yet, but he supposes it to be both.

Judging by the look on Will’s face, it cannot be the latter.

Will curses to himself, the ruffian, before huffing depreciatingly and climbing atop Hannibal’s wolf; he yanks on the fur on his way up, blatantly on purpose.

Hannibal growls at him. It does not, however, provide the effect he had desired: the lavender turns so sharp it borders on acidic, and Will cowers back, just for a moment.

For the rest of the ride home, Hannibal makes a point of releasing calming pheromones. Will's falling asleep almost instantaneously does not at all ease his growing concerns.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Will wakes, he does so in a manner that does not make itself known.

Hannibal has gathered by then that he is stealthy; what he hadn't anticipated was that concealment would be such an expertly integrated part of his core. He wouldn't have even noticed, in fact, had he not already been listening to the leisure rhythm of Will's breathing, the languish rise and fall of his chest.

Elongated observation concludes that there are a scant few tells to Will on wether he is conscious or asleep; one being that his inhales are slightly more frequent, another that his sleep-bleary eyes just blink and blink at no particular thing, docile. Beyond that, there is nothing.

He straightens from where he had draped himself over the armchair, pinches the corner of the page he's been reading, puts it aside.

"Will?"

At the sound of his voice, the serenity drains from Will's face as he sits up in bed, wired and twitching the bleariness away. His eyes land upon Hannibal's half-hovering figure, rake down mutely, but not without caveat — he must deem the sight innocuous enough, for the mindless fidgeting is traded subsequently for pressing the back of his knuckles onto the sockets of his eyes.

Hannibal watches on, cordially uncertain of his movements as Will scrubs his face raw with his palms, drags them through his hair, before mumbling quietly: "Where are we?"

He resolves in standing. A feat — the bed Will is tucked into feels miles out of reach. "In my home."

"No." Will furrows his brows, back to rubbing his eyes, like a cat. Hannibal reconsiders his state of upright, as his knees feel balmy and on the verge of giving out, quite unreasonably — he is resolved in *standing*, goddamnit.

"No." Will says, again. "Where are we?"

Hannibal takes a step forward — his knees operate shapely, and do not fail him. "Seven miles to the east from where we encountered."

He moves to sit on the edge of the bed. Just like on the field, Will fixes him with a regard from Hell, calculating and disdainful, making it known that he is wary and watchful of his every move; still, he partakes in no repositioning of his own. He remains, just where he is, just as he is.

“How long have I been asleep?”

“A day, roughly.” Hannibal motions to the window. Slivers of moonlight tear the room into stripes. “It is nearly midnight.”

Will does not react, at first. He’s staring down at his body, thumbing at the shirt that conspicuously *reeks* of Hannibal, then back up, around the room: “I haven’t slept like this, since…” He falters, then, gaze snapping back to Hannibal’s, bright and fuming once more: “Did you do something to me?”

The change is so sudden that Hannibal struggles to even register it. His body aches to retreat, for Will is doing that *thing* again, that subtle dissemination of compressed energy stuffed into a compact glare that makes Hannibal *fight* to push back against every instinct he knows.

Inhaling sharply, the lavender curls warmly around them like billowing smoke — he deflates, visibly. *Dear boy.*

“No, Will — of course not.” Hannibal assures, wondering if it truly *is* assuring. If the omega is capable of being assured, so filled to brim with cynic that he is.

Will glowers on, unimpressed.

“My pheromones,” Hannibal begins, choosing his words in especial for fear of any mishap. “They had a satiating effect on your omega. I apologize, I did not mean it to.”

“You did not mean it to?” Will repeats, slow, low enough to be infused with a growl. “You are competent enough to control them, are you not?”

“I can alter the nature of the pheromones I produce, but I cannot help that I produce any at all.”

When Will does not respond, a flux of desperation rises like gall up his throat to have the omega sated and rested again — it is evident that the fight drains him, and if his sagging against the pillows is any indication, he must be unable to fend off the inclination to rest and recuperate under the exposure to Hannibal’s scent. Comfort is essential to the healing and convalescing of an omega, and Will seems to have been deprived for far too long.

“It is natural, Will,” He continues on, “for your body to react this way. You were in direct proximity to me for three hours, and longer still in my presence. How long has it been since you’ve had prolonged physical contact with an alpha?”

Will pauses, seeming to mull it over: the fact that he has to *think*… Hannibal has to concentrate on not letting his jaw hang open.

“I—“ Will cuts himself off, says nothing for several moments, then: “I’ve never…”

Hannibal despairs. He cannot even *comprehend* that — “You’ve never been scented before?”

“No.”

“What of your pack?“

Will huffs. “Do I look like I have a pack?”

“Before. When you had one.”

Something like forlorn wist lowers Will’s chin. “I was exiled shortly after my first heat.”

“May I ask why?”

“No.”

Hannibal sighs, dipping his head to try and align their gazes. It is an impossible thing; Will will not look at him. “You know you can trust me, right?”

“Right.” He scoffs. He won’t look at Hannibal, but wherever he’s fixed on is sure to catch flame soon. “Because you promised I would get a locked room of my own, but here I am, obviously in yours; not to mention that it’s way past morning.”

His voice is low in the night, whereas Will’s bends the space around it. “I did not want to wake you.”

“It’s always about what you want, isn’t it?” Loud, rude, shrewd; afraid. “‘*I want to help you. I want to rescue you. I don’t want to wake you up and certainly don’t want you out of my sight, ever.’* Sounds pretty self-serving to me.”

“Don’t you think if I wanted to take advantage of you, I would’ve done it by now?”

“I don’t know!” Will exclaims, drawing back towards the headboard. There is a wild chord to him; his temper overlapped by the placatory atmosphere and a residual temptation to guard it. Almost reluctant to hold onto his spite, but still doing so with tooth and nail.

For him, perhaps, it *is* a matter of his life. For him, surrender might only come when the very last flame searing beneath his eye is snuffed out.

“I don’t — I don’t *understand* you.” He mutters, at last reciprocating Hannibal’s gaze. “You keep being so fucking polite, act like you fucking… I don’t know what you fucking *want* with me. You…”

“What I want, Will, is exactly what I say.” Hannibal interjects, he has to; his heart aches for this omega, this poor boy who has not known kindness for a day in his life. “No ulterior motives, no omitted truth.”

Will laughs, terribly sharp-edged. “This is why.”

Hannibal tilts his head, indisposed to prying but wanting to ask the question all the same.

Will saves him the trouble. “Why I was exiled — dysfunctional. Didn’t take orders from the likes of you. Didn’t *obey*.”

As in afterthought, he fists the hem of his shirt, lifting it up to the neck, revealing a bandaged torso as he mutters absently, “I’m certainly not about to, now.”

Touching two fingertips to the gauze around his shoulder, he fixes Hannibal with a glare through his lashes. “What is this?”

Hannibal has the nerve to look sheepish: he very decidedly *isn’t* sheepish. In fact he would do it again and again, tend to Will’s sylphy skin, mend what is recklessly torn, no matter how pissed he’s bound to get.

“I took the liberty.”

Will frowns down at his stomach. “Not surprising.”

“Are you upset?”

He looks up, still frowning. “Yes. But you knew I would be. You don’t care.”

A thrill encapsulates the base of his spine, underhanded, and he is adrift; he is lost to the sapient mind that actuates solely with what appears to be pure analysis and empathy, ardent as much as it is obstinate. After all, it is so rare that one encounters another that at first chance-meeting tunes crystal-sharp into their process of thought.

Hannibal knows about sharp; he knows about blades, about how it feels to have one be embedded in his flesh; he knows of defamation, of retribution, of castigation. He knows of the tenuous verge of dawn and the blunt hollows of loss.

And if there is one mere thing he knows of Will, it is that he is *sharp*.

“You are remarkably intelligent, Will.”

“Are you intimidated?” Will retorts, frown stretching gracefully into a smile whose curves are farthest from modest, and even so Hannibal is overcome with the urge to cease all manner of speaking save for flattery so as to ensure that it remains on his face.

He has been overcome with rather a generous list of urges as of late. It is unseemly.

“No.” He counters, mimicking Will’s smile. “I have to admit, I feel like I have found an equal for the first time in years.”

His anticipation might’ve stretched as far as to assume that Will might pose a confutation or blatantly refuse to acknowledge his admission in his ever-so-brash but astute conduct — what he hadn’t anticipated was Will to freeze, entirely stoic in his posture, and rake eyes over Hannibal’s face with the most beguiling showcase of hesitation. “Equal?”

“That’s what I said.”

He appears to be weighing his options, as to what sort of options Hannibal hasn’t a clue, but he must arrive at a conclusion nonetheless, for he straightens minutely, and steers the angles

of his smile just so. “Let’s be equals in truth, then. You answer my question, I answer yours. Counterpoise.”

“I have been nothing but truthful to you, Will.” Hannibal endeavors, sighing. “This isn’t necessary.”

“Have I not already specified that I do not believe you?” Will asks, hand mindlessly palming at his bandaged shoulder. “Right now, I expect the exact level of candor I am offering. I gather you are an honorable enough man not to withhold your egalitarianism — you cannot refute.”

He cannot; refute, nor deny Will anything when he is the one offering, for since their unorthodox encounter he has scarcely, if ever at all, given out any piece of himself.

“If you insist.”

What he’s also learned since their unorthodox encounter is that Will does not possess a tendency to hum and haw. “Why are we in your room?”

The answer comes to him easy enough. “My medical supplies are in here, and this room contains the only private bathroom among all other floors.”

What he gets is an unimpressed scowl in return. “*Candor*, Alpha. Not half-assed excuses. That is not all.”

There it is, again — the honorific Will spits at him like an aspersion being cast, slighter still from his actual cursing. His acuity serves only to seek errors of judgement, all the while it is firmly breath-taking; and despite the obstacles given rise, Hannibal is for the first time in his life content to try and work them loose.

He sighs. “Hannibal, please. You do not have to call me Alpha if you do not wish to.”

Will nods vaguely, but remains otherwise silent — notwithstanding a faint flare of mint.

It spurs Hannibal on: “I wanted to keep an eye on you. For medical concerns — you could’ve caught a fever, an infection, or any other complication that would’ve required my immediate assistance.”

“You could’ve put me in any damned room and checked up on me as often as pleased you.” Will denotes, ever-pragmatic. “Why am I in *this* room?“

Hannibal’s vacillating escalates for several moments. It is not customary nor usual of him to fall prey to doubt, let alone during matters that are almost exceedingly mild compared to the ultimatums he is faced with as the leading Alpha of his pack. But again, it is not usual for one leading Alpha of a pack to fall prey to an omega on the battlefield, either.

“Go on.” Will urges, both brows raised. “Cat got your tongue?”

He has to shut his eyes — Will’s abasing is only discouraging him further. “I must generally spend the majority of the day in either my study or this room. I wanted you by my side, and

obviously you could not be kept in the study."

Deeming it satisfactory enough, Will purses his mouth, nods once. Quite clearly the response has not proved jovial, but the verity seems to have saved Hannibal the scolding. "Your turn."

"Do not be put-off by my inquiring." He begins, wary to ask but desperate to know: "I only ask from a place of concern for your safety."

"Just ask it, Hannibal."

Hannibal. The ease with which it is drawled — his mouth flutters around the first syllable before it even parts. "Your heats." He croaks, "How do you manage them?"

"I go places." Will mutters, shrugging without a beat skipped. A lousy attempt at indifference; to any other it would be smooth-sailing, but Hannibal will not be fobbed off. "Caves."

"*Caves*." He repeats. "Alone?"

"Who else would I be with?"

"I'm—" He stops, does not know what to say. *Caves*. That must be fouler than any predicament, in many packs not even *acknowledged* as a considerable approach to even the soulless traitors; for an omega to spend a sacred heat in a godforsaken cave, in absolute solitude, susceptible to all peril, wanderers, natural conditions — to tolerate the backcloth of fatal urgency to fend for oneself when it is *essential* for the balance of the body to leave the mind adrift, when it is *vital* to shed of it and become undiluted instinct…

The rustle of shifting alerts Hannibal, a hitch of breath audibly smothered, and upon sight Will is constricted under what must be strenuous effort to hinder a whine.

"I — Forgive me." He rushes, sensing ostensibly late the soured undertone of his pheromones and hastening to neutralize it. "I am working myself up. But Will, you do not deserve this. No one deserves this."

Will makes no answer, for the most quiet of whines is stuck in the back of his throat; it is near impossible to hear, but it is there, driving daggers into Hannibal's chest.

Consequently, it is that clawing uproar nestled in his ribcage that awakens in Hannibal a moment of abrupt clarity: watching Will cower in reaction to his scent but roar back against his every word, watching him forewarn with hostility but never recede whenever Hannibal dares step close enough; he knows, he *understands* that Will does not truly wish to be left alone like he so assiduously assures at every given opportunity — terrified of what might happen if he is revealed to be consentient of the company, the unyielding hostility is his one functioning way out of the coal-black-hole of imperious hazard.

That is sufficient enough for Hannibal to banish the mere thought of giving up.

"You do have a home, don't you?"

Will has recovered from his distress, though in its wake he is left pliant; perhaps not entirely, but more-so than usual — in such a case as his own that would mean he is simply rendered reasonable.

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t you go?”

He is not even taken into consideration before Will is scoffing. “Because I knew you were following me.”

“Ah.”

Will grows still with a contemplative pause, before a *look* passes over him. “And — brace yourself, I will only say this once. You were right. I was too wounded to travel far, could not make it there even if I tried.”

Hannibal does not bother with concealing his pleased smile. If the terms of Will’s game is ire, ire he will enkindle.

“Why the caves, then? For your heats?”

“I have neighbors.” Will remarks, as though it is eminently commonplace for one’s neighbors to propose hardship. “Anyone who flees to the outskirts of town, especially where I live; they come with sin of the irredeemable sort. I do not trust them.”

Hannibal nods, quarreling to right his pheromones; by means of an outlet he opts to glower at the wall instead. “You have a right not to.” He then turns back to Will, unable to school his tongue: “I mean this in the most objective way, Will, but you have one of the most compelling scents I have ever had the pleasure to know.”

Will does not blush, not thoroughly — Hannibal doubts his prickly nature would allow him to — though he tucks his chin low into his chest, neck reddening. “I have dogs for that; many dogs. We have a nest.” He smiles, however absent, far-away. “They protect me. But even seven of them would not be able to save me should a rabid alpha decide I need *handling*.”

“They sound lovely.”

“They are.”

I would love to meet them, is on the tip of his tongue. He does not dare ask; nor does Will offer.

They share a sequestered meal. Hannibal shows Will to the kitchen when everyone else is sure to have gone to bed, and cooks the entire course with the skeptical boy shadowed over his shoulder and tracking his every move — Will insists the meal be prepared before his very eyes, and does not shy away from a state of plain rave whilst eating, or rather devouring, what he is served. Hannibal is left to hide his smiles around his fork, when in another lifetime, the discourteous guest would become ingredient for the evening after.

After their venture to the kitchen quarters, they both find solace in sleep; Will remains tucked into the bed whilst Hannibal humbly sprawls over his armchair, and when they wake they move around the spaces between each other in some bizarre sense of newfound truce. Will still does not overtly welcome Hannibal in his space, but lessens the quantity of the snide remarks pertaining *taking unwarranted advantage* and *being a horrid human being in general*. Hannibal supposes it is to be a considerable win on his account.

He also discovers that in terms of healing, Will responds most beautifully to naps; he is asleep for most of the following two days, and it makes Hannibal wonder just how deprived he had been of a proper good-nights-sleep. As it seems, Will has a dire tendency to shift and fuss restlessly during sleep, no matter how strongly satiated he is by soothing pheromones. Hereby Hannibal is lead to the conclusion that agitation this frequent under comfort must surely manifest itself in a larger scale when without: that proves to be no surprise when coupled with Will's excessive need to fill in the previous gaps. The likelihood of his being prone to intense ill-dreaming is disconcertingly elevated.

He refrains from asking after it over the course of their days, but his underdeveloped theory is proved to be accurate on Will's third night, during which Hannibal lays awake on the armchair, the occasional sigh of discontentment and a near-constant movement forfeiting him any semblance of rest. He spends hours fixated on whatever is emitted by the omega, making sure that the distress doesn't become potent enough so as to provoke any genuine harm.

Except that, it does.

"Will." Hannibal calls, tentative, to the boy that has begun trashing severely a few minutes past. He had assumed initially that Will would settle soon enough, that he would quietly descend into the regular, tender puffs of disdain, but in its stead the tossing and turning only develops further.

"*Will*." He says, sterner, though the trashing keeps on, hair stuck to Will's forehead in matted strands, shirt almost soaked through.

"*Omega*."

Will flinches awake, consciousness ripping fiercely into him as a gasp resonates among the wooden pillars. As soon as he catches sight of Hannibal he scrambles to the far edge of the bed, pulse jumping in his jugular, breaths throaty and derived from the diaphragm.

Hannibal remains seated on the edge of the armchair, entreating Will to some lucidity. "You were having a nightmare, Will. You're okay."

The boy is vibrating with the amplitude of his fear, and it percolates through to his scent, drowning the room in a fog of tart thyme laced profusely with chamomile. "No, I—"

"It wasn't real." Hannibal persists. "Do you hear me?"

He's heaving, the dear thing, looking every bit as cornered and trapped as is projected through to his scent. Hannibal fights his indecision for all of two seconds before he stands,

crossing the room in vigilant strides and crouching beside the other side of the bed, nearer than ever before yet with a safe distance kept.

“How can I help?”

Will looks frenetic, hair and train of thought both in disarray, eyes in a rapid quest around the room, watching for danger but blinking often enough that he would miss it even if it were to arise. “You can’t—“ He chokes, because he cannot seem to take a breath, because the inhales he manages are but shallow and disconnected. “You—“

“Anything, Will, and I will do it.”

Will shakes his head, breakneck fast, heaving gasp after gasp: “No — *no.*”

“It’s okay.” Hannibal only crouches closer because he knows Will won’t notice, because he doesn’t care, because he cannot *watch* as Will promptly hyperventilates himself into a blackout. “Hey.” He ducks his head, catching Will’s gaze, speaking lowly. “Hey. It’s alright.”

“I’m—“ Will falters, dragging the first sweeping breath down to his lungs and back up, lashes fluttering helplessly with the exhale.

“That’s it.” Hannibal whispers, inching closer, setting a measured rhythm for him to imitate. Will’s eyes flicker down to his chest, a glower pulling at his features, but another deep breath only just scrapes down his throat and that is enough.

“Good.” Hannibal praises, tilting his chin lower to pursue Will’s lowering gaze. It seems to be probing, nebulous as to its craving but probing nonetheless.

Will’s mouth parts as though on the brink of saying something, but the words die on his tongue — he clamps down on it, audibly locking his jaw and shaking his head again, painstaking and perplexed.

“Yes?” Hannibal digs, because somehow he has grown a necessity to know everything Will wants to say and anything he doesn’t.

“I don’t,” Will begins, swallows, begins again. “I can’t—“

“What do you need?”

“*Nothing*.” He snarls, upper-lip curling, the frustration at his lack of articulacy straining his voice. “Can you just—“

Without transition Will darts forward and buries his nose in Hannibal’s neck.

At the juncture of contact Hannibal grows implausibly still, perhaps even grows into a state of physical shock as Will draws a profound breath that is exhaled against the seam of his neck.

He cannot move, nor speak, fearful of startling Will away or interrupting whatever it is that has gotten him moulded into Hannibal’s skin; chiefly, he does not dare touch without

permission, just stands with his arms at his sides and lets Will take what he needs.

And *God*, does Will take. Does he lay hold of everything in his territory, a divinity of a black hole, greedy and demanding and an absolute *delight*. His inhales are a staccato, one heaved after the other as in a delirious instant he is nosing along Hannibal's jaw — pants grow ragged and the scrape of his mouth coax gooseflesh, but he will not lift his arms, will not do anything but growl against Hannibal's neck and tremble helplessly.

"Will." Hannibal tries, once Will's growls begin to unsettle both their wolves.

"What's happening to me?" Comes the whisper, folded scratchily into his shoulder, another anguished growl tearing from Will's chest when Hannibal turns his cheek into his hair.

"Oh, sweetheart." He soothes. "Can I touch you?"

A sniff against his neck. "No."

He smiles his exasperation into the fine nest of hair. "I want to help."

"That's all you ever seem to want."

"Because you never let me."

"I'd be a fool." Will mumbles, even as his lips mouth the words tormentingly into flesh. "To let you."

Hannibal shudders when a nose digs firmly into his jugular. "Why, darling?"

"I…" Will inhales, a shudder of his own racking the both of them bodily before he *whines*, thoroughly, high up in his throat. "I don't *know*. I don't—"

Hannibal shushes him. "Sweet boy. You are overwhelmed."

"Don't tell me how I feel."

"Am I wrong?"

For the very first time, Will does not attempt to controvert, but growls crossly to make up for his current reluctance of incessant protest.

Hannibal bares his neck — Will seems disinclined to stray from the spot he's found, precisely above the scent gland, where he's wont to be, where Hannibal wishes he would *stay*. "Let me touch you, Will. Let me take care of you."

"I don't *want*—"

"You do." He croons. "My dear boy, you do. I can feel it. I can *smell* it. I can make it better."

"No." Will huffs, again. "I can't have this."

Right in that moment, when his own words are heard aloud, something snaps — smooth as dispersing cloud but immediate to act upon. The spell is broken; Will withdraws like he's been burned, kicking off the covers and rising from the bed in a rush.

"You can." Hannibal calls after him, coming to his own feet. "You deserve to be cared for. *I* want to care for you."

"You don't know me."

"You are denying yourself happiness. Why?"

"I don't want *happiness*." Will spits, voice rising steadily. "I want to survive."

"You should not be forced to survive; can you not understand that you have a life to *live*?"

Will swallows, taking a step back. His voice is clogged. "I don't trust you."

"Do not lie to me, dear thing." Hannibal says, stepping forward, gentle as he's ever been. "You cannot live, nor can you survive, if you restrict yourself from primal satisfaction."

Will nudges his chin up, defenses gathering a hyaloid cloak around him. "I am perfectly satisfied with my tranquility."

"Your tranquility will only strip your soul."

"So let it have my soul!" He exclaims, teeth flashing in a sneer, and then, quieter: "It's a burden to bear, anyway."

Will is panting again, his outburst a pinkish stain atop his cheeks, eyes gleaming with vivacity and shrouded with a muted agony and palms loose by his sides and he is so inscrutably *beautiful*.

Five steps across the room, and Hannibal would be at Will's side. He takes them, voice too hoarse, too heavy to travel far. "Lay it on me."

Will sucks in a breath, his response little more than a whisper. "What?"

"Lay your burdens on me, Will."

He reaches for Will's wrist, gradual enough that he grasps the exact intentions, and when no dissent shoves him away he circles it in a loose grip, affirming that Will may reclaim his hand at any moment. Steering them skyward, he guides the wrist until it grazes the spot Will had moments ago been nuzzling, his chin rasping against his forearm, milkish skin dreadfully velvety, and when he tilts his head just so his lips land on the tender skin.

It is not a kiss; Will's sanction is a gamble, and too many chances have been spent. Content in relishing the press of his mouth against where Will's scent is infinitesimally sweeter, Hannibal smirks into it.

"I will bear them for you."

Will's voice is hard; his expression harder. It is only his eyes that betray him — an imperishable fount of aquamarine glistening with pearls for tears, silent and ineluctably fatal. They do not fall, as don't the demons from the Heavens; they are suspended amidst the lamenting blue whose core transpires among the sky and in Will's eyes.

Will swallows. "That's not how it works."

Hannibal smiles, burrows his cheek into Will's palm. "It can be, if you allow it."

"Allow you to touch me, is that it?"

"Perhaps." He releases Will's wrist; it doesn't fall from his face. "And so much more than that, Will. You do not need to be touched, if it isn't what you prefer."

"Is that an offer?" Will mutters, finally, finally beginning to smile.

"It is a *please*."

Slowly but surely, the hand on his cheek delves into his hair, and Will nods. "Fine."

The sharp rocks of the cliff-side, he'd thought — suitably, for Will has shoved him onto the point of balancing on the tiresome edge of it, looming over the acme, his footing barricaded merely by a hair's breadth: "Fine, what?"

"You may touch me."

An exhale; a dam broken. Hannibal's arm snakes around to Will's back, one splayed palm ramming him close and the other finding his neck, then *up*, his cheeks — Will huffs as he's lured in, Hannibal's thumb tracing the cut of his jaw, the curve of his brows; terror-stricken fingertips, gliding over his eyelids when they flicker closed, sealing away those eyes, those *bewitching, pestilent eyes —*

Will presses his mouth to his. Hannibal sighs into it, a warm and tentative and deliberate slide to their lips, and somehow Hannibal *knows* this is where he belongs, with this boy, wether he is riddled with blood or petulance, wether he is on a field snarling beside the wolves he'd beat unconscious, or smiling bashfully atop the bed of the wolf he could've, but didn't.

"You will not tame me." Will tells him, in between a preening whine and the next. "Don't for a second think that you can."

"My dear," Hannibal divulges, tugging at the neck of his shirt to mouth more efficiently over Will's shoulder. "You have fight branded in you. I will have you with it, or I will not have you at all."

Will growls, low from the depths of his chest; Hannibal welcomes it as gladly as a purr. They both merge with the other, a tangle of striving limbs whereas just the morning past they were toeing around the shadows of the other.

Indeed, their tangling accumulates to a fervent bout of wrestling, during which the contents of Hannibal's desk are nearly defenestrated and the armchair slammed against the farthest

wall; Hannibal smiles up at Will, when at last the boy has him pinned to the bed.

“Once you have a wolf laid under you, there is no salvaging them. Am I doomed for the same fate?”

“You *chose* this fate.” Will grunts, “Insisted on it, even.”

But despite his words he is a trembling thing, bare chest flushed and gasping, just as he was when he had so viciously flaunted his triumph over Randall with the flames of challenge charring his eyes.

Hannibal decides that he will have him like this, and not any other way.

Chapter End Notes

they literally did not leave the room the whole chapter. i struggled. they made looove <333

a ginormous thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone who took the time to read my story. I appreciate it very fucking much. lots of love xxxx

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